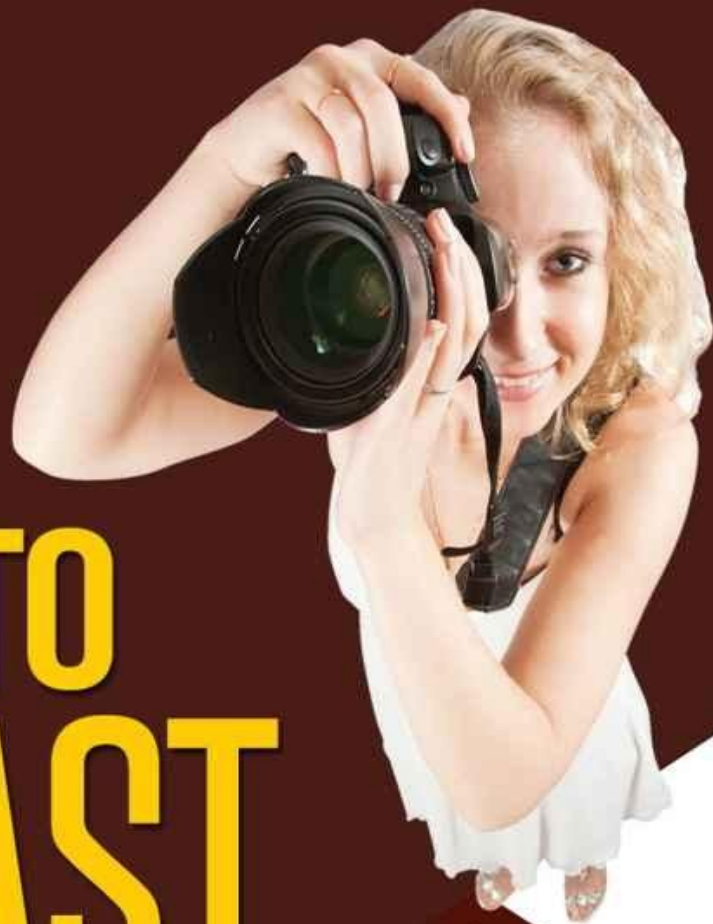


HOW TO PHOTOGRAPH AND MARKET HOUSES TO SELL FAST



TIM DENBO

*For Real Estate Agents,
Property Managers,
Investors and Brokers*

*Learn What Equipment is Needed,
Cost, Potential Savings, How to
Create Virtual Tours, Panoramas,
HDR Images, and Many More Tips
& Tricks of the Professionals!*



Eat-a-Frog Publishing

How to Photograph and Market Houses to Sell Fast!

For Real Estate Agents, Brokers, Property Managers and Investors

Learn How to Photograph & Market Properties to Sell & Win Your Next Listing. What Equipment is Needed, Cost, Lighting, How to Create Virtual Tours, Panoramas, Videos, and many more Tips & Tricks of the professionals!

By Tim Denbo

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Eat-a-Frog Publishing

Who Needs to Read This Book

Real estate agents, Brokers, Real Estate Assistants, Office Photographers, Virtual Assistants, Investors, or anyone involved in listing or promoting real estate, commercial or residential!

Who Should NOT Read This Book

People looking for a book about photography principles and all the details about lighting, exposure and aperture settings. People looking for a big book with lots of detail. This is NOT a book about becoming a professional photographer, lighting expert, or even how to become a great photographer! There are many other good books that will do that. This is a short, concise book to teach you the essentials, plus some bonus tips and tricks!

Why You Need to Read This Book

This book was written to help real estate professionals that want to “Do-It-Yourself”, to get the full picture from an insider on how to photograph a property, be it commercial, residential or even a vacant lot. This book is also intended as a crash course on marketing 101, an overview of tech tools and tips, and how to market your listings to not only sell fast, but to set you up for your next listing!

Tim Denbo has been a licensed real estate agent in two states, then started his own successful real estate photography business, and ultimately, launched a successful international real estate virtual tour service for real estate agents. As the President/CEO of VirtualTourCafe, Tim gets a lot of questions about how to take great pictures, and how to market properties to sell fast!

Tim has been quoted as saying “a listing is a marketing opportunity, regardless of the market conditions, property condition, or how quickly the home will or will not sell”. So for the purposes of this book, we focus mostly on the real estate agent, virtual assistant, or office photographer interested in learning (just enough) photography and marketing do’s and don’ts to take great pictures to market listings to sell quickly!

This book is intended to highlight the specific steps, equipment, and processes to help you market your listings for more exposure, greater visibility, and yes, we hope faster sales, as seen first-hand by someone who has built a career out of sales, marketing, social media, real estate and photography.

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Things to Consider Before Starting

There are some things you should consider before starting on this adventure. Over the years, we have learned that some people love to Do-It-Yourself, while others prefer to have someone else do it for them. There are also those amongst us (no judgment) that just don't want or like working on a computer, on the internet, or just don't want to take the time to learn. That's okay! You may also be of the philosophy, and some would say "rightfully so", that real estate agents and Brokers should focus on the tasks they are already good at, finding sellers and buyers, listing, negotiating, and writing contracts while leaving the photography to the professionals. That's fine, just be true to yourself and do what you feel is in the best interest of yourself, your business and your clients!

Checking Your List and Checking It Twice:

- Do you enjoy photography?
- Are you a pretty good photographer already, or think you can be?
- Do you have the time to photograph and market your listings yourself, or have someone who can do it for you?
- Do you have the investment capital to buy the equipment, if needed?
- Do you enjoy working on the computer, and have at least average computer skills?
- Do you like to learn new things?
- Do you want to be in full control of your listings, marketing efforts and success?

If you answered yes to most or all of these questions, we encourage you to read this short book and decide for yourself if you want to photograph your own properties and set yourself up for success!

If you answered NO... then maybe a Do-If-For-You service is right for you. You can learn more about “Do-It-For-You” services at www.VirtualTourCafe.com.

Do You Have a Website?

Every real estate agent and Broker today should have a real estate website, and probably does. However, you may want to revisit your website to make some modifications, and/or review the name you are using to be sure it matches your goals. You will also want to be sure your website is mobile friendly, or built on a responsive platform.

What's in a Name?

The name you choose should be something that people looking to buy or sell real estate in your neighborhood or market segment might use as search words online, such as “San Francisco real estate” or “Los Angeles Short Sales”, or “Chicago REO Properties”, etc. Now, this doesn't mean you can't use your name such as “John Doe Real Estate”, or “Sheila Brown Real Estate Services”, or any other name that means something to you and your clients. However, given the option, it is best to use words in your website name that will help get you found. In this business, these are some of the best words to use in your business name:

- Neighborhood or City
- Farm Area if there is a name to the location you “farm” for real estate
- Real Estate (however this is too broad unless combined with one of the others)
- Real Estate Homes for Sale (see above)
- REO, Short Sale, Foreclosure (along with another geo-targeted name from above)

Websites

You may want to create a website that allows you to present your potential buyers and sellers a place to search for properties and learn about the neighborhoods, or areas of your specialty. You want to demonstrate your experience as the professional and the “go-to” resource for their needs.

1. Use a website name with geo-keywords in it such as Pleasanton REO, Chelsea Luxury Homes, or Milford Beach Homes.
2. Avoid using your name as the website or company name unless you are well known. And then you still may want to add some other keywords such as Tim Denbo Bay Area Luxury Homes.
3. Check out **Elance.com** as a source to have your website designed if you want something done from scratch. Or, you may want to use a full-service website service such as Advanced Access.
4. If you have your website designed from scratch, you may want to consider having your website designed in the WordPress format as this is a popular and easily configured format for website design and maintenance. And you will have no trouble finding qualified developers, programmers and maintenance support.
5. Be sure your website is a Responsive website design. In layman terms, this means the website will automatically resize or adjust to the type of device it is being viewed on, such as a mobile device, iPad, Android Tablet, etc.

TIP: Check out your competition in your area, see what names they use. Don't copy exactly, but you can get ideas! Google them, see what keywords they come up under. Do your research before choosing a name!

Investment Cost

Nothing is free! At the minimum you are going to need the right camera equipment, which you may or may not already have. Some agents may even use their mobile phones or tablets. Here are some basic guidelines to help:

Estimated Cost: 0 up to \$2000

- Zero! If you have a newer (2013 or newer) iPad, iPhone, or mobile tablet with a built-in 8 megapixel or higher camera, then you could get by with this. However we recommend an SLR camera (see below), if you have the ability and capital for the investment.
- \$500-\$2000 Capital Investment for Camera, Lens, Flash, Tripod, Software (*subtract for any equipment you already own*).

Annual Savings Potential

For a single real estate agent, your savings is directly related to the number of listings and average cost of a professional photographer in your area. For a real estate office, this is multiplied by the number of agents and listings your office has in an average year. Our estimates below are based on real-life experience of the author as well as of our photographer and real estate agent/Broker clients. ***Your results may vary*** of course due to the many variables. Use as a guide only:

Agent (1) **\$1,000 - \$2000/yr.** (average 10 listings/year at \$100-\$200 per listing)

Agent Team (2) **\$2500 - \$5000/yr.** (average 25 listings/year at \$100-\$200 per listing)

Office (15-25 Agents) **\$12,000 - \$25,000/yr.** (average 10 listings/month)

IDEA: If you have a real estate office, you may want to consider sharing the savings with one of your associates who is just getting started and could use a little side income, or even a spouse or significant other of one of the associates.

Do You Have the Right Equipment

You have several options when it comes to equipment, however some choices could also affect your income, so you need to choose carefully.

DSLR Cameras

- Canon (Canon T3i, T5i, D7, Canon 50D-70D, others)
- Nikon (Nikon D3100, Nikon D5100, D7100, others)
- Other DSLR Cameras (Samsung, Sony, Fujitsu, others)

To Flash or Not to Flash

Many real estate photographers are switching from traditional flash photography (or natural lighting) to HDR or high-dynamic-range photography. If you decide to go this way, be aware it will take a little practice to get your pictures looking professional and the way you and your clients will want them to represent the home they are selling. Here are some tips and reasons to use traditional flash photography vs. HDR:

Flash

- Avoid using the built-in flash
- Purchase a camera with shoe-mount Flash (external flash connector)
- Flash photography will require less post-shoot editing
- Less of a learning curve, even though you still need to practice and understand lighting to get the best pictures, especially with bright sunlight in the windows.

HDR

- No Flash required for HDR (High Dynamic Range)
- Allows for more control over the image during post-shoot editing (software required)
- Can provide much better exposure and reduce the sun glare or “whiteout” from windows and over-exposure or under-exposure of interiors. Highly recommended!
- Requires special software such as Photomatix Pro, Photoshop or others.
- Cost effective HDR processing services are available at VirtualTourCafe.com

Lenses

You will want a wide-angle lens. But what qualifies as a wide-angle lens when it comes to real estate photography? Let's start with the basics. A standard camera lens is 35mm. A wide-angle in *consumer* terms usually refers to a 24-28mm lens, providing a slightly wider angle than the standard 35mm (lower the number, the wider the field of view). However, in real estate photography, 10-18mm is recommended.

Recommended Lenses- Professional or semi-pro lenses 18mm or lower (wider):

- Canon 10-20mm (\$700-\$800)
- Tokina 12-24mm* or Tokina 11-16mm* (with either Canon or Nikon mount) (\$400-\$600)

Tripod

You will want a good quality professional or semi-professional tripod. If it costs less than \$100 retail, it is probably not the quality you are looking for, however we have found some exceptions such as the Ravelli APGL3 Professional.

For Still Photos, you will want a light-weight yet sturdy, high-quality tripod with a 3-way head. If you decide to do video, you will want a heavier-duty video tripod as a second tripod. Some good brands are:

- Manfrotto
- SLIK Pro*
- Ravelli APGL3 Professional* (for video)

*Used by Author

Panorama Head (Pano Head)

This is optional! Many photographers offer only still images (with Ken Burns* effect), and no panoramas. And some agents don't consider a virtual tour a virtual tour unless it has 360 degree panoramas. However, this is your choice. Many agents and buyers don't like to look at the slow moving panoramas, and therefore don't use them. Here are a few examples of Panorama Heads for you to review; everyone has their own preference and skill level:

- GigaPano
- Panosaurus 2.0 Panoramic Head (Amazon)
- Manfrotto 303 QTVR

- Nodal Ninja 3 MKII
- Pano-MAXX and Others

*Ken Burns is a documentary photographer/videographer who developed a method of making still images look as if they are moving by panning in/out, moving left-right, etc.





Now You Got It!

The Opportunity

We are going to borrow a paragraph out of the text “How to Photograph Houses by Stan Barron”. The booklet was written for members of The Institute For Luxury Home Marketing, founded by Laurie Moore-Moore. In this booklet, Stan says:

“Selling a house is not a real estate function...it is a marketing function, and pretty photographs sell more houses. Think about the marketing used for professional products you are exposed to. Have you ever seen a bad photograph (taken with a point-and-shoot-camera) in an ad for a BMW? Of course not. Ever seen a badly composed shot in a cosmetics ad? Never. Good photographs are worth the effort.”

So, with the most expensive asset most people will ever own or sell, is it not only good business sense, but the agent and brokers responsibility to represent the client in a professional manner that includes photographs that highlight the homes features, and marketing that expose it to the public, even more so than the BMW dealer?

Real estate agents spend an average of \$5,500 annually on business expenses (including marketing, virtual tours, professional photography, etc.), according to the National Association of Realtors®. Another statistic as reported in the 2012 NAR Buyers Report is that 88% of home buyers found virtual tours to be helpful in their search for a new home and 67% found them to be very useful! As a real estate agent or office manager, you can save yourself or your agents hundreds if not thousands of dollars by learning to take your own pictures, and create virtual tours to market the property online for maximum exposure. With record low mortgage rates (in 2012-2013) and the housing market making great improvements, now is a great time to get started saving money and selling more homes!

Let's Talk Photos

Four Keys to Capturing Good Quality Real Estate Photos:

1. A **wide-angle lens** - You want a lens that is somewhere between 10mm and 18mm for a digital camera. The lower the number the wider the lens. A standard camera uses a 35mm lens so an 18mm will shoot much wider shots. We recommend 10-12mm for optimum results (without a fisheye effect). We use the Tokina 12-24mm lens. The newer Tokina 11-16mm f/2.8 AT-X116 Pro DX II is even better!
2. **Good Composition** – You want the picture to include as much of the room as possible, and to be clutter free. **Use a tripod** whenever possible! You will want to be sure the camera is level and that's hard to do when hand holding the camera. You can use walls or furniture to align your picture to be sure you are shooting level/straight. Also, remember to squeeze the shutter button half-way to focus and then gently finish the squeeze... gently now so as not to shake the camera. Better yet, use a remote switch or use the 2 second timer in the camera and remove your hands. **TIP:** You can focus on one area of the room to lock the focus (such as windows or away from windows) and then re-position the camera for the composition and lighting. We use HDR or Auto-Exposure Bracketing (AEB) to get the best exposure for all areas/lighting of the room.
3. **Proper Lighting** – There are several tricks to lighting. You can use a very slow shutter speed (on a tripod) such as 4-6 seconds for a long exposure with natural light (no flash), or use an external flash (preferred). **TIP:** Always **turn on all the lights** in the room you are shooting and let in as much light as possible. Turn the blinds so that the light is allowed into the room without glare if possible. Another trick is to shoot the property an hour after dawn or an hour before dusk. Lighting is best when the sun is near the horizon! Another newer development is **HDR photography** (High Dynamic Range) and we will discuss this in a little more detail next.
4. **Color/White Balance:** Most cameras have an automatic setting for white balance (AWB) and you should probably use this until you get a little better. If you do, we recommend using the RAW Setting to save your images, this way you can process the images with full control over white balance once you are back in the office or home. When you are ready, try using the different white balance options such as

Cloudy, Sunny, Tungsten, Florescence or Custom (K) where you can set the “temperature” such as 2800, 3800, 4200, 5000, etc. You can then try them out in different lighting and color situations to get different effects. *I generally set my white balance to Cloudy when shooting outdoors, even on a sunny day and then AWB for interiors unless I am shooting video. Again, I shoot in RAW mode which allows me to change the white-balance and many other settings during the post-production processing later in the studio.*

Understanding HDR Photography

HDR stands for High Dynamic Range and is a process of how you take the images in the field, and how you process those images in the studio (post-production). Some newer cameras also have an HDR option, however we do not necessarily recommend this for best results. In a hurry, go ahead!

The first step in using HDR is to be sure your camera is capable of setting AEB (Auto Exposure Bracketing) of at least 3 levels. Following your camera instructions you would set your AEB at 2 f-stops below and 2 f-stops above the standard exposure for any given shot (f-stop is the aperture or focal number of the lens, such as f4, f8, f11). Then, when you take a picture (using the 2-second timer), the camera will automatically take 3 images, instead of just one. The camera and the subject must be perfectly still in order to take 3 images exactly the same.

Next, when you are back in your home or office, you will use an HDR image processing program such as PhotoShop or Photomatix Pro to process the images and combine all three images into a single image that combines the best of all three exposures (or send them to a service such as VirtualTourCafe for overnight processing). The author uses Photomatix and then uses Adobe Lightroom 4 Pro and Canon Digital Professional to fine-tune the image.

VirtualTourCafe offers HDR photo processing for a very low cost. Upload your images by 8pm and your HDR images will be professionally processed, color corrected, and returned to you by 8am the following morning!

Photographing A House to Sell!

These are the three main **MONEY SHOTS** that you must have in real estate photography to help promote the listing, get buyers to the house, and ultimately **SELL THE HOUSE!**

For your reference, or starting place, here are the settings I use on the Canon 50D for all the following photos:

The Money Shots:

- Front of House
- Kitchen
- Master Suite

Add to the Money List:

- Master Suite Bathroom
- Living Room or Great Room
- Backyard (pools, patios, gardens, ponds, water features, views)

The Remaining Pictures Would Be:

- Family Room/Den
- Bedrooms
- Bathrooms
- Bonus Rooms
- Basements
- Attics
- In-law Suites
- Other important areas such as out-buildings, pools, spas, side-yards with RV parking, etc.
- You may also want to add nearby Parks, Schools, Community Centers/ Pools/Fitness Centers, especially for Condos or planned communities.

Taking the Shot

Below are some examples of real estate photos shot with a 12mm wide-angle lens. Notice that the shots are not close-ups; they try to get as much of the room(s), area or yard into the frame as possible. When shooting the front of the house, try to get as much of the house (but not the neighbor's) as possible. Always be sure there are NO CARS in the driveway, trash cans, or anything else that will detract from the home.

Here are the **Canon EOS 50D settings** used for all the photos in this book:

Outside Settings: F10, ISO 200, Landscape Mode, Cloudy, Timer 2 sec, AEB Setting (0, +2, -2)

Inside Settings: F10, ISO 200, Standard Mode, AWB (Auto White Balance), Timer 2 sec, AEB Setting (0, +2, -2). In certain lighting conditions, I will manually adjust the White Balance to 2800, 3200, etc., to match the lighting such as bathrooms or kitchens with a lot of yellow lighting.

Photography Techniques and Examples

Full Frontal



Front Shot Showing Portion of Drive and Landscaping



Front Shot with very Slight Angle of Front



Elevated Front Shot to Show Circular Drive and Space



Same House – From Side with Foliage in Front

Interiors (use wide-angle and HDR from a corner or angle, composition is key)



Living Rooms are Best Shot at Angles – Use Flowers, Pictures for Added Interest



Turn ON All Lights! - Include Patio Doors and Eat-in Kitchen Area



Wide-Angle of Kitchen Showing Counter Space and Island



Highlight Key Elements and Interior Design (still using wide-angle)



Elegant Master Bathrooms are Great Selling Features



Bathroom Trick: Hide yourself behind plants or where the mirrors meet!



With Large Bathrooms, Try to Show the Full Size of the Vanity and Detail



Be Creative and Use Mirror to Add Depth and Interest

Exterior – Backyards, Pools, Landscaping



When Possible, Shoot the Full Yard and House



Pools Make Great Listing Photos – Low Angle Length of Pool



Include Interesting Landscaping such as Rocks



Waterfalls and Outdoor Fireplaces Add Interest



Use Angles that Show Flowers and Water Features



Using Flower in Foreground for Color and Patio Chairs with Flower Pot



Wide-Angle of Yard and Pool Showing Hills in Background



Highlight Trees, Patios, Size of Yard



Positioning Your Camera for Wide-Angle Shot of Room (Camera in Horizontal Position)

To Stage or Not To Stage?

Staging in real estate home selling has been going on for years, and it is widely accepted that staging helps to sell homes faster. So, why is it that not all homes are staged? Well, you can probably answer this question better than I can, but I will give it a try... First is cost! Staging can cost anywhere from several hundred dollars on the low side, to many thousands of dollars for a large, high-end home, especially if it is in a city such as New York, Beverly Hills, Malibu and other exclusive communities! Second on the list would probably be the home sellers are not prepared to have the home staged, and/or do not want staging since they are still living in the home. We could go on, but these are probably two of the biggest reasons.

Staging Options

1. **De-clutter!** This is first and foremost on the list of minimal staging activities. People have a hard time looking past the clutter. If a house is cluttered or worse yet, dirty and cluttered, it naturally invokes a feeling that the house has not been taken care of. Work with the sellers to clean it up, remove items not needed and put as much into storage, or at least the garage, as possible. Less is more!!! I can't tell you how many times I have seen real estate agents putting on the gloves to pitch-in on the cleanup and even washing the windows themselves! One way or another, get it done and you will be doing yourself and the sellers a valuable service that will likely return to you both in a faster sale for a higher price!
2. **A Home No More!** Have *the* conversation with your sellers that once the house is for sale, it is no longer *their home*, it is now a house that they are selling, an investment, an asset, and to maximize the return on their asset, you will need to remove or minimize some personal items such as family or risqué pictures, hide personal jewelry, and possibly even religious items that could get in the way of the potential buyer seeing this house as *their new home!* **TIP:** For safety and security, firearms, valuable jewelry and prescriptions should be hidden or removed!
3. **Freshen Up!** Throw a fresh face on the house by using a professional cleaning service to remove the dust and cobwebs. Carpet cleaning and a good scrubbing to the kitchen and baths will go a long way! You might even consider a fresh coat of paint.
4. **Self-Staging or Budget Staging:** Build your own collection of staging items, or use a professional stager to add some small staging items such as plants, flowers, fruit bowls, pictures, etc. This minimalist approach to staging can help add a warm feeling to the house.
5. **Go For It!** Professional cleaning, de-cluttering and full staging by a professional cannot be beat! In most cases, the investment will pay for itself in less time on the market and a better price for the home. Most stagers will work with the furniture in

the house unless the house is vacant. Simply re-arranging the furniture, a few rented items, and identifying what needs to be removed to storage. A clean washed car sells faster and for more money, and so does a house!



A fully staged home with plants, lamps, sofa, chairs, coffee table books and more...



Simple staging with fruit bowl, plant, candles, and de-cluttering goes a long way!

Video – Lights, Camera, Action!

Videos are a great tool to market yourself and your properties. However, videos can be much more involved and require additional equipment. There are options though that can help make your transition to video as simple as ordering popcorn at the theatres!

Video Options

1. **Simple Automatic Videos:** The fastest and simplest way to get into videos is to use a virtual tour service to convert your still images into a video format and distribute to YouTube, iTunes, AOL Video, Yahoo Video and others. VirtualTourCafe is one such service that can do this for you, but there are others as well.
2. **Raw Video or the Personal Video:** You can use your mobile phone, tablet or video recorder to create simple un-edited or raw marketing videos. You may have seen some of these where the real estate agent is talking while driving to the listing. The benefits of this type of video, is that anyone can do it, it is personal, and the cost are minimal to none. The drawback of this type of video is that it is usually of low quality, poor lighting and poor sound effects. If done right, and of short duration, these can be used sparingly to add to your video marketing program, but should not be used as the only videos.
3. **Semi-Professional Videos:** If you are willing to invest in the right equipment (if you don't already have it), and invest the time and patience to practice, anyone can create a semi-professional video home tour. See details below in “Shooting Your Own Video Tips”.
4. **Professional Videos:** Hire a professional with all the equipment to do it for you. This is one area where you may want to let the pros do it. I have been seeing a trend where some Broker offices are hiring or identifying a person in the office to be the photographer and videographer for all the agents. This is sometimes a marketing position, or even an agent that has the time and skills to do the photography and videos for the entire office.

Shooting Your Own Video Tips:

1. When shooting video, we recommend not using the auto settings. Instead select fixed settings. You can start with these, and then experiment with your camera, lighting and scene to optimize for best results:

Canon EOS 7D

Outside Settings: F4 or F11, ISO 160, 200 or 320 (will adjust if necessary), User Defined, Cloudy, Manual Focus

Inside Settings: F4 or F11, ISO 1250 (will adjust if necessary), User Defined, White Balance Tungsten Light (2800), or custom setting such as 3200-5000 depending on lighting condition. Again, try not to use Auto mode for best results in video clips.

2. Lighting is best early in the day or late afternoon when the sun is low to the horizon and less harsh, unless it is coming into the windows at this time of day. You may need to shoot some clips during the magic hours of 1 hour before dusk and 1 hour after dawn and then additional exterior clips when you have good sunlight on the front and backyard of the house. Check with the sellers, they will sometimes know the best time of day for lighting.
3. Sound: We recommend using an intro video of the agent introducing the house and features, then an exit video clip thanking the viewer for watching and providing an invitation to connect or view the home. The remaining video can use background music and/or narration recorded post-video production and added to the video as a soundtrack. This is much easier and usually more appealing to the viewer than a fully narrated video while filming.
4. For simple raw video, we recommend keeping it short (30-60 seconds), with as little camera movement as possible to keep from making people motion-sick and then use an external microphone if possible (see below). As a general rule, people will watch a poorly shot video with good sound versus a well shot video with poor sound quality. Sound quality is important!
5. Here are some tips and suggestions:
 1. Do NOT use a video camera, instead use a DSLR Camera with video capability. This will allow you to use the high-resolution and convenience of the camera, along with a high quality wide-angle lens. An example would be the **Canon 7D or 70D with Tokina 11-16 2.8 lens.**
 2. Use a video tripod with external video lighting such as the **Ravelli APGL3** (\$100)
 3. Use an external microphone such as the **Lavalier Microphone by audio-technica** (\$30)
 4. For best results use a video dolly, such as the Ravelli ATD Pro Tripod Dolly (\$40) to include some smooth movement to simulate walking through the house. Another option is to use a Glidecam HD2000 (\$500), however be prepared to spend some time practicing to use the latter correctly. The author uses both.

5. When setting your ISO use one of the following: 160, 320, 640, 1250, 2500. Do NOT use 125, 250, 500, 1000. ISO refers to the sensitivity of the image recorded to light. The lower ISO numbers are used in brighter light, such as 160 or 320 for outside and 640, 1250, or even 2500 for indoor low light situations. Be aware, the higher the ISO, the grainier the image may become. So, shoot as low an ISO as possible while still allowing enough light.

Mobile Phones and Tablets

Can you use mobile phones such as the iPhone, iPad, Samsung Galaxy III or IV? Absolutely! Will the picture quality be as good as using a DSLR with wide-angle lens? Absolutely not! However, they are convenient and cost effective, so we understand that some people will want to use these tools. Here are some tips and suggestions if you are going to go this route.

Tips for Mobile Photography

1. Always shoot with the phone or tablet in the horizontal camera position!
2. Use the best lighting possible! Since you cannot add an external flash, you will want to be sure to have good lighting, turn on all the lights in the house and you may even want to carry along an extra lamp for dark rooms. Use a natural light or full spectrum light bulb to avoid the yellowing effects of standard bulbs. There are many options available, just type “Photography Lighting” in Amazon or visit your local photography store, or even Target/Walmart.
3. Purchase a wide-angle lens attachment (optional). Here again there are many options, such as the Universal 3-in-1 lens kit by CamKix. Be sure to choose one that fits your particular phone or tablet as they do vary. The examples below were shot with the standard lens built-in.
4. Steady and Align Camera: Be very steady, and align with a wall, window or fixture. Or better yet, use a tripod with an adapter for your specific phone or tablet and treat the phone or tablet as you would any other camera, taking good still pictures aligned correctly as mentioned in earlier chapters.

TIP: The mobile phone cameras I have tested have a wider angle lens than the tablets I have tested. If you have both, take the same picture with each, then compare to see which includes more of the room (the wider lens). Use whichever has the wider lens, as long as the quality is equal.

Below Are Some Mobile Phone Examples Using Samsung Galaxy SIII









Virtual Tours – What You Need to Know

Virtual tours have been around a long time as well as many virtual tour providers who offer everything from full-service virtual tours including photography and 360 degree panoramas, to full-featured and customizable “Do-It-Yourself” virtual tour services. And then there are the basic tours with still images rotating in a slide-show style format and little or nothing else. So, what really qualifies it as a “Virtual Tour”?

Some say in order to be called a virtual tour it must include at least one 360 degree panorama image. Others say any slide-show of still images that presents the house in a virtual format (online), qualifies as a virtual tour. I have heard many arguments on both sides of this discussion. But first, let’s talk about the “purpose” of a virtual tour before we get too bogged down by dictionary definitions.

As far as a real estate agent is concerned, why do you even need a virtual tour in the first place? After all, in this economy do you really want to spend more money on marketing???

Is it to satisfy or even impress the Sellers? Is it to give the potential Buyer (some from far away) a better view of the property and surroundings, a sort of walk-through? Or is it to demonstrate your marketing skills, exposure, and improve your branding? It is probably some combination of these reasons, or all of them.

None of these reasons require a 360 degree panorama; however the Buyer may get a better sense of the property and especially the neighborhood or yard with a panoramic image that gives the feeling of looking all around in a complete 360 degree circle of view. Some homes and larger rooms show better with a panorama and some are probably better displayed with a wide-angle (10-18mm) lens. You could also use floor plans to demonstrate these features.

Keep in mind your objectives and not the dictionary definition (below). Real estate marketing is about representing the agent, Broker and Seller’s best interests, and at the same time, positioning the agent/Broker as the online marketing expert!

With this information, let’s look at the dictionary definition of “Virtual Tour”, or in this case, the online Wikipedia definition:

“A virtual tour is a simulation of an existing location, usually composed of a sequence of video images. They also may use other multimedia elements such as sound effects, music, narration, and text. The phrase “virtual tour” is often used to describe a variety of video and photographic-based media. Panorama indicates an unbroken view, since a panorama can be either a series of photographs or panning video footage. However, the phrases “panoramic tour” and “virtual tour” have mostly been associated with virtual tours created using still cameras. Such virtual tours are made up of a number of shots taken from a single vantage point. The camera and lens are rotated around what is referred to as a nodal point (the exact point at the back of the lens where the light converges).”

So, what all this boils down to is “options”. A virtual tour should offer options to include still images in a slide-show format with good quality music, pleasing transitions, full and

partial panoramas (optional), and even YouTube-style videos. More and more Buyers and Sellers are searching YouTube for homes, yes homes for sale! YouTube is now the second or third (depending when/who you ask) largest search site online, not far behind Google who, in case you weren't aware, owns YouTube!

And we haven't even talked about social media, syndication, branding, website links, downloadable e-flyers, mobile-friendly, and high-definition images... So if you decide to use virtual tours, look for a virtual tour provider that offers options that promote the agent, the listing, and is automated and easy to use with great support!

Virtual Tour Building Software

Once you have your virtual tour images created (still or stitched), you need to have a virtual tour player (frame/window) or a way of displaying the virtual tours in an online window (or theme) for your potential Buyers and Sellers to see.

You have **two major options** to consider for the delivery of your virtual tours.

1. **Use a software program** such as those listed here ([All About Panoramas](#) Section) to create and display the virtual tours in a stand-alone fashion. You will need to have a computer server to host the virtual tours as your clients and their prospects will want to be able to view them 24/7.
2. **Use a Virtual Tour Provider** such as VirtualTourCafe (<http://www.VirtualTourCafe.com>). The benefits of a Virtual Tour Provider will depend on the provider, but in general, they will provide the following features and benefits that would be difficult if not very expensive to do on your own:
 - **Ease of Use** (Can save you a tremendous amount of time and energy)
 - **Agent and Broker Branding** (tour themes, logos, banners, etc.)
 - **Server Hosting** Included (usually one year)
 - **Distribution** (some include this and others do not) to real estate sites such as Trulia, Zillow, Realtor.com, Homes.com, HotPads, Homeseekers, etc.
 - **Video Creation** (convert the virtual tour into a video)
 - **Video Distribution** (some send to YouTube, others (like VTC) send to YouTube along with additional video sites such as iTunes, AOL Video, Yahoo Video, etc.)
 - **Extras** such as Google or Bing Maps, Walk-Score, Social Networking Connections, etc.
 - **Links** – MLS (unbranded) and Branded Links for the Virtual Tour
 - **Other Marketing Features** such as Print Flyers, e-Flyers, Sign-Riders and more.

[All about Panoramas](#)

Panoramas are still images stitched together to create a panoramic (full circle or partial) view of a room, yard or front of house.

Here are a couple examples of stitched 360 degree panoramas. These panoramas were created by taking 12 still images and stitching them together with desktop software (Microsoft ICE). Alternatively, you can even use cameras and phones with Panorama Settings and Auto-Stitching in the camera or phone. Just be sure it is a high-res image (1-5mb) and is saved in .jpg image format:



Once loaded into the proper virtual tour software online (such as **VirtualTourCafe.com**), the viewer would see this as a single 360 degree image in 3D affect as if they were standing still in the middle of the room (or other location), and they would turn in a full circle looking at the entire space. This is the purpose of a panorama being used properly.

Virtual Tour Stitching Software

- PanaVue (\$64-\$199) www.PanaVue.com
- EasyPano (Panoweaver, Tourweaver, \$99-\$199) www.EasyPano.com
- ARCSOFT Panorama Maker (\$59-\$79) www.ArcSoft.com
- **Microsoft ICE*** (FREE) <http://research.microsoft.com/en-us/um/redmond/groups/ivm/ice/>

*Used and Recommended by Author and VirtualTourCafe

Creating or Stitching Panorama Images

You can create your own panorama images by following these steps. First, you will need a **panorama stitching program** to create your own images. Some cameras have panorama stitching capability built into the camera. In this situation, you can upload these images directly as mentioned earlier in Panorama Edit. There are many software programs to create panoramas but we use a FREE program by Microsoft called ICE. It's easy to download, easy to use and has good results. Here are the instructions to download the Microsoft ICE program and create your own stitched panorama images ready to be uploaded to VirtualTourCafe.

Taking Panorama Pictures

Your pictures should be taken with a tripod preferably, but could be taken by hand, if careful. If using a mobile device, the alignment is automated! Be sure to stand in one position and take 9-12 images (or the number specified by your mobile device or program), for a 360 degree panorama. Each picture you take should overlap the previous picture area by 30-40% to allow the images to “stitch” together and should be at the same horizontal level. **Using a tripod with level will help.**

TIP: Take a picture of your hand at the beginning and end of a set of images to let you know the beginning/end of each panorama. This makes it easier to identify when locating images later, like a bookmark.

If you are taking a Partial Panorama, take at least 3 or 4 images using the same method.

The better you can keep the camera in the same horizontal and vertical position, the better the panorama image will turn out. This is why a tripod is recommended.





Camera on Pano Head (vertical and horizontal levels)

Download Microsoft ICE

Download this FREE panorama editor here or search (Google) Microsoft ICE:

<http://research.microsoft.com/en-us/um/redmond/groups/ivm/ice/>

Microsoft Research

Links

- ICE Forum
- Silverlight Deep Zoom
- HD View
- HD View SL

Compatibility

Microsoft Image Composite Editor works on 32-bit and 64-bit versions of Windows XP, Windows Vista, and Windows 7.

Download

Version 1.3.5
June 7, 2010 **NEW!**

Download for 32-bit Windows

Download for 64-bit Windows

[Help: 32-bit or 64-bit?](#)

Image Composite Editor

What is Image Composite Editor?

Microsoft Image Composite Editor is an advanced panoramic image stitcher. Given a set of overlapping photographs of a scene shot from a single camera location, the application creates a high-resolution panorama that seamlessly combines the original images. The stitched panorama can be shared with friends and viewed in 3D by uploading it to the [Photosynth](#) web site. Or the panorama can be saved in a wide variety of image formats, from common formats like JPEG and TIFF to the multiresolution tiled format used by Silverlight's [Deep Zoom](#) and by the [HD View](#) and [HD View SL](#) panorama viewers.

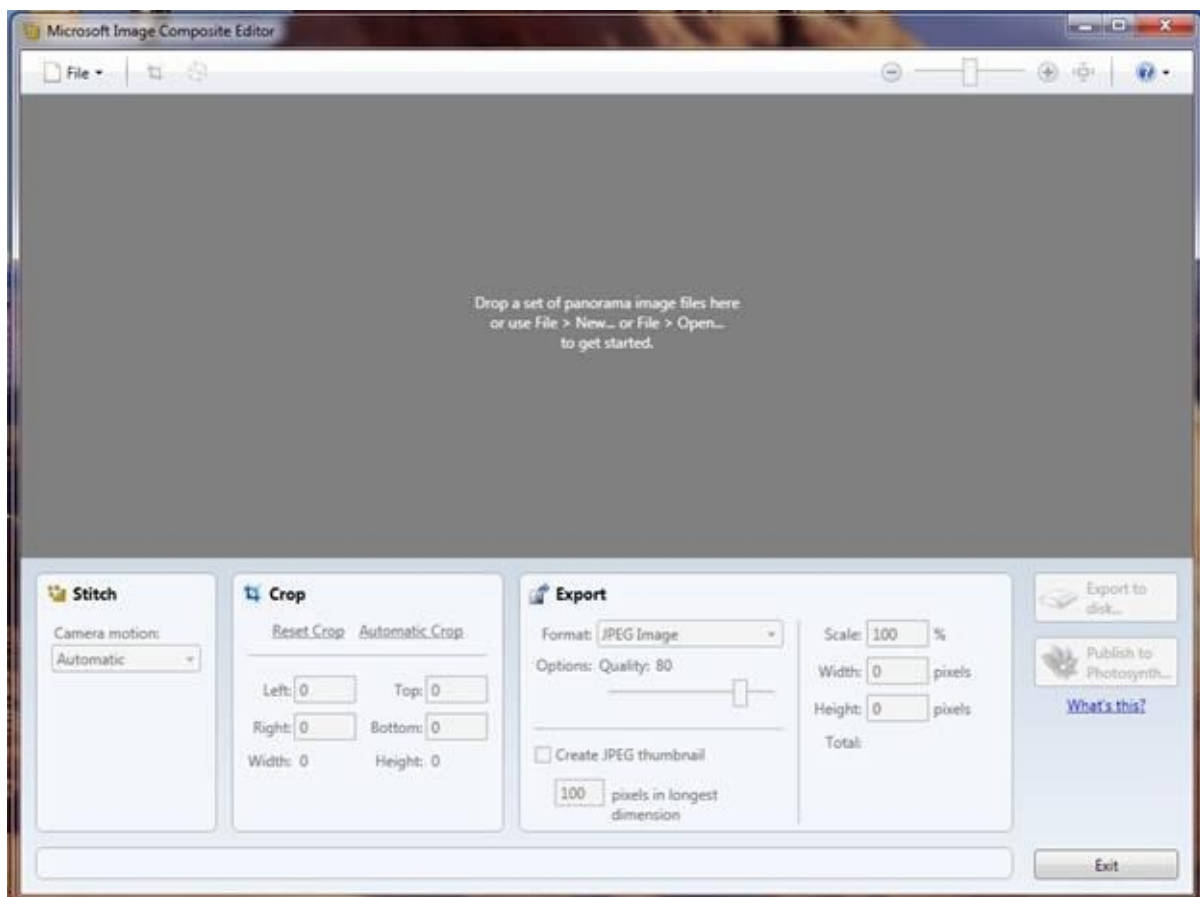


New features through version 1.3.5

- Accelerated stitching on multiple CPU cores
- Ability to publish, view, and share panoramas on the [Photosynth](#) web site
- Support for "structured panoramas" — panoramas consisting of hundreds of photos taken in a rectangular grid of rows and columns (usually by a robotic device like the [Canadian forest heads](#))

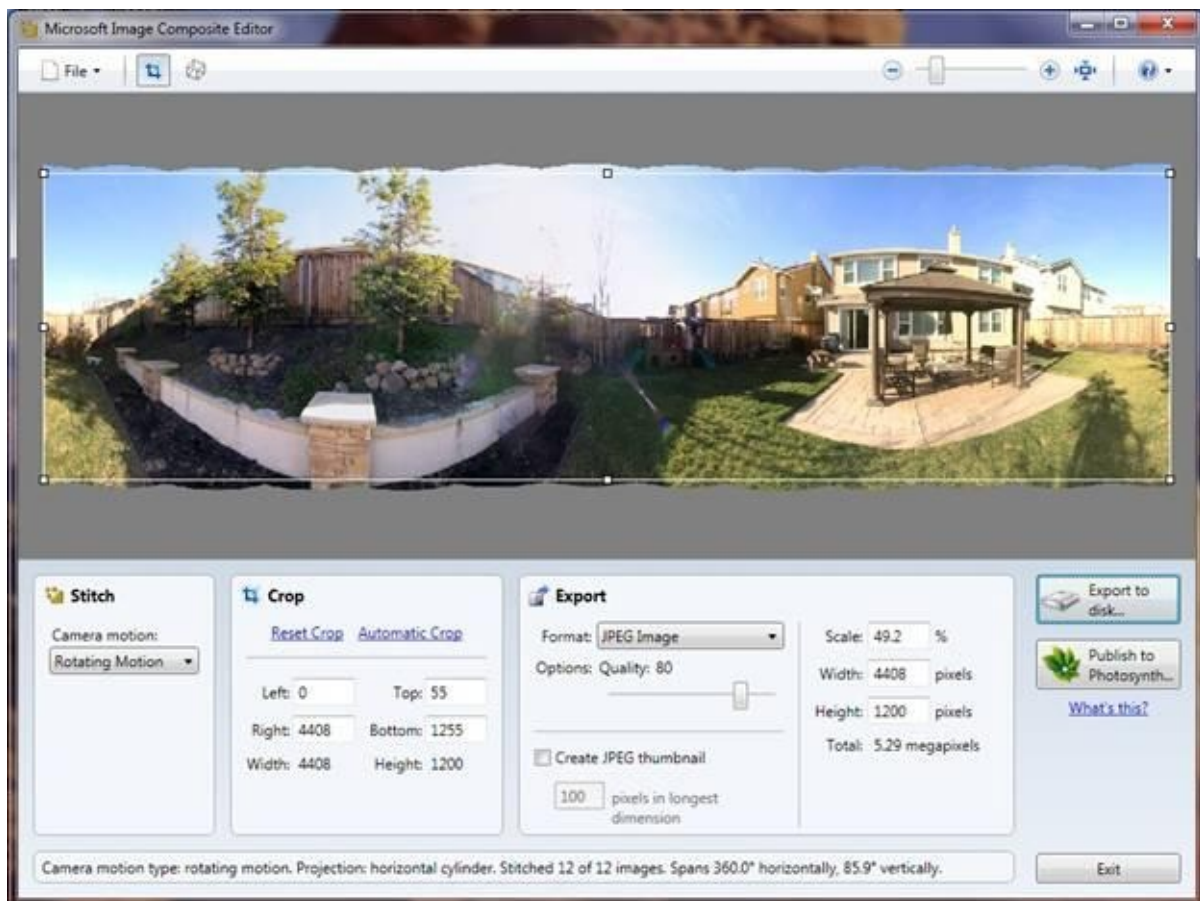
Using the ICE program to Stitch Panoramas

Locate and **select your images** on your computer, then drag your pictures to the ICE window (below). Alternatively, you can use the ICE program to locate and load your images with the FILE menu in the top left (below).



- Change the **Stitch** to “Automatic”
- Change the **Crop** to Automatic
- Leave the **Export** on “JPEG Image”, “Quality 100”
- Change the **Scale Height** to between “1000 and 1200” – experiment to find the best fit.
- Click **Export to Disk** and Rename and Save the File to your computer where you can find it and upload it to your virtual tour program.

Example screen of 360 degree panorama image after 12 individual images were stitched together. The final panorama will have even edges as demonstrated by the outline (crop) lines.



Notice here that the original image had “bumps” on the top/bottom of the image. These are the sections of the pictures that were not perfectly aligned horizontally. When you crop the image in the stitching process, you remove out those uneven spots. If you are hand-holding the camera, or you don’t use a pano-head that is leveled properly, you will end up with a smaller vertical image, as you will need to crop-out the uneven spots. Always level the camera and use a panorama head when shooting panoramas if possible.

You've Got Pictures... Let's Talk Marketing

The successful real estate agent in 2014 and beyond will not only be an expert in his or her neighborhood, the real estate transaction and principles, but also marketing! Both for your clients as well as for yourself, it's becoming more and more about marketing! You need to find ways to let your potential buyers and sellers know you are the expert, and then why they should choose you over another agent or brokerage? This is sometimes called "branding". You need to brand yourself!

Here are some basic marketing strategies and how to implement each:

It's a Contact Sport Folks!

This is the fastest, easiest and least expensive way to get your business started (yes, real estate is a business). This type of marketing involves face-to-face contact by visiting with home owners, potential buyers, other real estate agents, real estate marketing groups and social groups in your area of service. Here are some steps and activities to support this type of marketing campaign:

- 1. Door knocking!** That's right, put on your sneakers and hit the pavement! Many successful real estate agents have built their career by working "farms". Just as the name implies, you need to plant the seeds and nurture your farm. So choose a neighborhood or area with 100 homes or more and walk the neighborhood at least once monthly. Bring along a newsletter or something of interest to hand out when they open the door! Repetition and consistency is key!
- 2. Real Estate Marketing Groups.** Ask your local association if they have marketing groups in your area. There may be several that meet on different days. Marketing groups are designed to help agents network with each other and share listings, coming-soon opportunities and buyer wants and needs. Get involved, sponsor the group, the coffee, a meeting, etc. This is a great way to network with other agents and brokers and when the time comes for doing a deal, wouldn't you rather work with someone you know?
- 3. Get Involved!** Join the Chamber of Commerce, a charity organization, church, or other community group that meets on a regular basis. Don't do it JUST to sell real estate, do it because it makes you feel good, you may help other people, and it makes you a better person! The icing on the cake is that you may make new friends, and friends like to do business with each other!
- 4. Local or National Events.** Most state and local associations hold annual or semi-annual meetings or events to help agents network, learn about new products, changing market conditions, etc. These are a great way to continue your education as well as network with other agents.

Direct Mail

Direct mail can be a great way to market your service if you are able to get a reliable list. Some vendor partners such as title companies, lenders, etc., may be able to provide you with a list. Otherwise, there are sources you can purchase lists from such as Melissa Data, USA Data and others. However, it can also be the most expensive, at least to start. If you decide on this method, here are some tips and suggestions:

1. The list is the key! You can put together a list yourself by going through the phone book and adding the names and addresses to a database or spreadsheet (such as Microsoft Excel), or simply by addressing letters and envelopes directly. You can also purchase mailing list from many sources, but be sure they are a reliable source with updated list. Some companies we have found to be reliable include InfoUSA, USA Data and Melissa Data, but there are many others, and we are not endorsing any.
2. The key to any marketing campaign, and this includes direct mail, is consistency and memorability. You cannot send out one letter and sit back waiting for the phone to start ringing... it simply will not happen. You need to develop a campaign strategy such as mailing a series of letters, every 1-2 weeks over a several month period, or sending a monthly newsletter. There is a saying in real estate that you need to “touch” someone at least 6-8 times before you even have a chance at building a relationship. Customers don’t buy your service until they trust you. You must build trust before you can start selling your service (Sell yourself first, then your service.)
3. Some advantages of direct-mail are that people are becoming more and more frustrated with email and you may actually have a better chance at getting their attention through direct-mail than you will with email. Direct mail also has the potential to stay around longer since it is a physical flyer or letter.
4. There are many resources to learn more about direct-mail. Some we recommend are: Dan Kennedy and Bill Glazer “Outrageous Advertising that’s Outrageously Successful” and “The Ultimate Sales Letter” by Dan S. Kennedy, author of the BusinessWeek bestseller, and No B.S. Business Success.

Email

Email is being used more and more and can be very effective both from a cost perspective and a success standard. However, there is one major consideration, the **CAN-SPAM Act of 2003**. No, this is not a can of Spam to be eaten, but instead a very strict and very expensive law that regulates who you can and cannot send email to. **Be sure you fully read and understand this law before doing any email campaigns.** The bottom line with the CAN-SPAM Act is that you **MUST** have permission to email anyone you send email to. This means, in addition to other things, that you cannot purchase a mailing list of 10,000 real estate agents and send them an email. This would be considered SPAM and you could be fined. We are not offering legal advice. Please read the law yourself and make your own decision on how it applies to you, your business, and your email list. If you do decide to do email marketing, here are some tips and suggestions:

1. Start immediately to build your email list. Hold Open Houses for other agents or on your own listings. Use a sign-up form for your email list or newsletter at your open house. This way you have physical documentation of the customer giving permission. Include something on the sign-up such as “I am giving permission to email me your newsletter, market statistics, etc.” You may also want to say “your email address and/or name will not be sold or given to anyone else”.
2. Similar to the Direct Mail campaign, you want to build a campaign with repetition and regularity. Send an email once a week, once a month, or every other week on the same day if possible. This will get your customers in the habit of expecting your email.
3. Sign-up for an email service such as Constant Contact, iContact, InfusionSoft, MailChimp, or others. Most have a free trial available.

Online Promotion (PPC, Organic Search)

Most people are familiar with Google, but there are other search engines such as BING/Yahoo and others. However, Google does control about 60% or more of the internet search results, so if you are going to try online marketing (Pay-Per-Click), you will probably want to try Google PPC. But don't disregard Microsoft BING/Yahoo, they may provide a better bang-for-the-buck with your advertising. If you have a website which, of course you will want to drive traffic to your site, here are some ideas and suggestions:

1. If you are not familiar with SEO and PPC, you may want to save time and expensive trial and error, and hire a professional. Be careful though, there are many "pros" who will take a lot of money and not provide the best results. You may want to learn a little on your own by reading some books on PPC and/or hiring a professional that you can verify their reputation and results.
2. Before getting started with PPC, spend the time and money to be sure your website is optimized for the keywords you will want to use in your search queries. Check with your website provider, your webmaster, or other professional you trust to review your website for SEO. You can also look for a good SEO outsourcing professional at Elance.com or Fivver.com.
3. Use geo-search and long-tail search keywords. This means to use keywords that ONLY attract people/clients from your geographic area, such as the difference between using the keyword "virtual tour photographer" or "Chicago virtual tour photographer", "Chicago real estate photographer". You can also select your target market area so that you are only advertising to people in your area. Don't waste money attracting people not in your target market area.
4. Organic search is the result of writing articles, publishing press releases, writing blogs, and creating back-links to your website. A great way to do this in the real estate field is to use a service such as ActiveRain.com. Activerain is an online real estate networking service that provides the opportunity for real estate professionals, including vendors such as photographers, to network with other real estate professionals. You can learn how to blog here for free before you decide to pay for the "Rainmaker" subscription, which we use and is a great value!
5. Write articles and submit to real estate sites such as [Activerain](http://Activerain.com), [Trulia](http://Trulia.com), [RISMedia](http://RISMedia.com), and others.
6. Write press releases and submit through PR sites such as [PRWeb](http://PRWeb.com), your local newspaper, real estate guide, or any other online news/PR site.

Word of Mouth

This is, of course, your best and least expensive method of marketing. However, it is also the hardest to develop until you have your first clients, along with some examples of your marketing, which you can then use to create a portfolio to show to your potential clients. To get to this stage of marketing quicker and to optimize this strategy, here are some tips and suggestions:

1. Offer to co-list or work on a team with a real estate agent you know, or even one you don't know. The key here is that you want to get experience.
2. ASK for a referral or recommendation EVERY TIME you sell a house, weather you represented the buyer or seller, and you know the customer is happy. You will get more referrals and testimonials if you ask for it BEFORE the house closes, or during the closing. People sometimes have short memories, don't wait until a week later.
3. Get all testimonial approvals in writing so no one can accuse you of using their testimonial without their permission.

Marketing Summary

12 Step Listing Program

1. Every listing is a **MARKETING OPPORTUNITY** to market yourself, your skills and your property! Regardless of market conditions, how fast it will or will not sell, market the property as if your future depended on it! In fact a listing is **THE BEST lead capture** tool you have!!! Every listing should produce enough leads to generate AT LEAST one new client!
2. Write a list of the properties best features. Then **take pictures to support those features**, as well as the money-shots and any others that will give a sense of the house and the surroundings. Take 25-30 final images so your listing will go to the head of the class in places such as Realtor.com and others.
3. **Create a virtual tour and video tour** from your images and then add your property listing, pictures, and virtual tour to your MLS and all the top real estate sites such as Realtor.com, Trulia, Zillow, Hotpads, YouTube, AOL Video, Yahoo Video and others.
4. Add the listing and/or virtual tour to your social networking sites such as **Facebook**, Twitter, LinkedIn.
5. **Create a print flyer** and add to your sign box in front of the house as well as for your Open House events and possibly a mailing or as you walk your farm.
6. **Send an email to your buyers list** with a link to your virtual tour and/or video tour.
7. **Send Just Listed postcards** to at least 200 houses surrounding your house for sale as well as your farm, if different location. Do the same for Just Sold when your listing is sold.
8. **Create and use a QR Code** on your sign-rider and all flyers and postcards. The QR code should take potential buyers/sellers directly to the property listing, a single-property website, virtual tour or video tour.
9. **Hold an Open House** (or 2 or 3) and invite the neighbors! You may want to hold a special preview Open House just for the neighbors, or invite them an hour earlier than the Open House regular hours!
10. If your real estate association has marketing meetings, go to the **marketing meetings** to announce your new listing. If not, you may want to email all the real estate agent you know to give them a heads-up, or even advance notice. Do the same to all the agents in your office.
11. **Send weekly sellers report** to your clients showing in detail how much active marketing you are doing to promote and sell their home.

12. **Get a testimonial and referral(s)** from your sellers immediately upon an accepted offer! This is when they are most excited! Then USE the testimonial in your marketing!!!

In Summary:

SEVEN TIPS and TRICKS for Taking Pictures that SELL HOUSES

1. **Invest in a Good Camera!** Choice of camera and lens is very important. Yes, your iPhone or iPad can take great pictures, and in some cases this might suffice. However, for the best results and ability to upgrade, we recommend a DSLR (Digital Single Lens Reflex) camera. If you want to do video someday, buy one with HD video capability like the Canon T3i, Nikon D3100 or Canon 7D. The Canon T3i with 18-55mm lens will run you about \$600 or the newer T5i for around \$800. The investment will be well worth the results.



2. **Go Wide or Go Home!** – To get those really good room and house shots, you need a wide-angle lens, which is why the iPhone and iPad are not necessarily your best choice. You want a lens that is somewhere between 12mm and 24mm for a digital camera (the lower the number the wider the lens). A standard camera uses a 35mm lens, so an 18mm will shoot much wider shots. We recommend 18mm or wider, and 12-14mm is much better. For our photographers, we recommend a Tokina 12-24mm or the newer 11-16mm lens and they almost always shoot at the 11 or 12mm setting (lower the number, wider the angle). See figure 1



Figure 1: 12mm wide-angle lens on Canon 50D using HDR - no flash

- Become a Composer!** – You want the picture to include as much of the room as possible, and to be clutter free, as well as level/straight, not crooked (Figure 2). The way to do this is to **always use a tripod** whenever possible! You will want to be sure the camera is level and that's hard to do when hand holding the camera. You can use walls or furniture to align your picture to be sure you are shooting level/straight. Also, remember to squeeze the shutter button half-way to focus and then gently finish the squeeze... gently now to not shake the camera. **TIP:** You can focus on one area of the room to lock the focus (such as windows or away from windows) and then re-position the camera for the composition and lighting. A crooked picture or crooked wall will divert the attention of your viewers and cause a distorted look to the room. Use a wall, counter, bookshelf, side of the house or some other “straight” vertical and/or horizontal point of reference to align your picture composition. Then include as much of the room as possible. Generally speaking, a picture with a slight angle such as from the corner of a room or one side of the kitchen looks better than a square-on image. Try different angles or look at other professional pictures to find what you like best.



Figure 2: Slik Pro 700DX Professional Tripod (about \$175) - aligning to left wall

4. **Light it Up!** This is one of the most critical elements in taking good pictures and frankly one of the hardest to get right. First off, turn ON all the lights in the house. Open the window shades or if you have bright sunlight, turn the blinds to allow light but keep the glare out. Use a flash whenever possible and an external (attached) flash are better than the built-in flash and will be worth the investment (\$100-\$500). I also recommend using a diffuser such as the Gary Fong Lightsphere (Figure 3). Timing is also critical. The best time to photograph the house is to have the sun on your back as you photograph the front of the house. This will give you that nice blue sky behind the house. After-all, this is the money-shot, right? If you have some clouds in the sky, this is even better. Bright sunny days are actually the most difficult to shoot, especially interiors. A slightly cloudy day and you will get better shots both inside and out. Another trick is to use **HDR** (High-Dynamic-Range) photography. Do you want to learn how to do that? Let me know...There are several tricks to lighting. You can use a very slow shutter speed (on a tripod) such as 4-6 seconds for a long exposure with natural light (no flash), or use an external flash (preferred).



Figure 3: Canon 40D using Canon external flash and Gary Fong Lightsphere diffuser (about \$50)

5. **Stay Focused!** One word, “tripod”. I was taught a long time ago by a professional photographer a key lesson: “if the picture is worth taking, it’s worth taking with a tripod”. This is nowhere truer than in real estate photography. Use a tripod to steady the camera and reduce the chance of blur. Better yet, set the camera’s built-in timer on 2 seconds and remove your hands completely once you have the angle and focus, then click and let the camera take the picture.
6. **A Balanced Life is a Happy Life!** Most cameras have an automatic setting for white balance (AWB) and you should probably use this until you get a little better. When you are ready, try using the different white balance options such as Cloudy, Sunny, Tungsten, Florescence or Custom (K) where you can set the “temperature” such as 3200, 4200, 5000, etc. If your picture looks too yellow, try changing the setting to Tungsten or Florescence and notice the difference. You can then try them out in different lighting and color situations to get different effects. I generally set my white balance to Cloudy when shooting outdoors, even on a sunny day and then AWB for interiors unless I am shooting video.
7. **Shoot it Once, Twice, Three Times a Charm!** When you get home and you find your best shot is blurry, or the one with the perfect lighting is crooked, it will drive you crazy! Don’t take the chance. Instead, always take 2 or 3 pictures of each room or area. If you find a really great angle or view of a room, take several and then you can choose the one you like best. When our photographers take pictures of a house they typically shoot at least 100 pictures or many more, just to get the 20-40 best shots for the client. After all, this is one of the great features of digital cameras, almost unlimited film!

8. **BONUS! Size is Important!** Set your camera on medium resolution somewhere around 3000x2000 (depending on your camera) and not the highest resolution available, but not the lowest either. For online photographs, the MLS, etc., you will typically want images that are about 600x400 pixels (more if your MLS allows it). And for a virtual tour or a flyer/postcard, you will want high-definition images that are around 1800x1200 pixels. You don't need images with higher resolution than this, as it takes up more space, wastes time in uploading and will not offer any improvement for the viewer.

8 Bonus Tips (Do's and Don'ts):

1. **Mirror, Mirror on the Wall...** Always be on the lookout for mirrors! NEVER get yourself or anyone else caught in the mirror! If you do, either don't use it, or Photoshop yourself out.
2. **Bathrooms...** To photograph bathrooms, use a tripod set to a low height to get below the vanity mirror. You can also use an object to block you from being seen in the mirror, or position yourself between two mirror corners and you will mysteriously disappear...
3. **NEVER photograph** a bathroom with the **toilet seat up**, or toilet paper hanging!
4. **Take several angles** of each room. Shoot from the far left corner, far right corner, etc.
5. **Windows...** Whenever possible focus away from the windows to get better room lighting. Shoot at angles that show the window, but don't shoot directly into the window unless the sun and lighting is not harsh, such as cloudy or early/late in day. Avoid shooting when the sun is bright into the windows. Sometimes high-noon can be a good time to shoot if the sun is above the house and not glaring into the windows.
6. **Outside Shots...** Check how the house is facing, north, south, east or west? If you are not sure, you can use Googlemaps to check before you go to the house. Always try to shoot away from the sun when shooting outside shots. Have the sun on your back as you shoot.
7. **It's About the Features!** List the features of the house then take the pictures that support those features. People are not buying the couch, the vase, the nice sculpture, or even the big screen TV, they are buying the house. Take pictures that emphasize the size of the rooms and the space, don't focus in on detail or furniture unless it is a selling feature.
8. **Virtual Tours...** Good photographs that mesh well can add magic to your marketing when used together to create a virtual tour and video. Consumers tend to engage more on sites that offer virtual tours and video.

Click Here [To Get Your 30 Day Virtual Tour Free Trial!](#)

BONUS! Email me, tell me what you liked, didn't like and any suggestions, and I will send you a FREE copy of my DVD "Photographing Real Estate – a Field Guide" when it becomes available.

Final Comments:

Are you excited to get started? We hope we have been able to provide you with some valuable insight into Photographing Properties to Sell! We have talked about the equipment needed, different lighting techniques and post-processing to optimize the visual experience for your potential clients. We showed some examples of photos that help to sell homes. Whereas this was not intended to be a lesson on photography techniques, we hope we have been able to demonstrate the type of shots that become the Money Shots, and how to create your own stitched panorama images, if desired, but not required!

If you liked this e-book, we hope you will share your opinion with others by providing a book review. If there is anything we can do to be of service to you, please let us know. And drop by to visit us sometime at www.VirtualTourCafe.com, or send me an email at tim@VirtualTourCafe.com, we are always wanting to hear your feedback, especially if we were able to help you, or if you have any suggestions on how we can do a better job!

P.S. The phrase “Eat-a-Frog” was coined by Mark Twain and refers to doing those things you hate to do first! If you don’t like marketing, do it first. If you don’t like cold-calling, do it first. If you don’t like starting something new like social networking, or taking your own videos or photographs... do it first!

“If it’s your job to eat a frog, it’s best to do it first thing in the morning. And if it’s your job to eat two frogs, it’s best to eat the biggest one first.”

[Mark Twain](#)

About the Author

Having first been introduced to computers in 1980 even before IBM built their first PC, Tim Denbo achieved what many people even today struggle with, an understanding of how computers can benefit and solve business needs. This unique strength, combined with personal and management skills, lead to a successful career in computer sales and management.

Tim has been named Employee of the Year and trained hundreds of employees in sales, management, and computers. Having managed national sales teams with multi-million dollar accounts as Director of Sales and Marketing, Tim has even appeared on QVC as a (sold out) guest host, twice!

In 2008 Tim entered into real estate and was licensed in two states with experience in both residential and commercial real estate sales techniques. In 2009, Tim started a local virtual tour business to help other real estate agents market their properties by utilizing the latest technologies and social media to gain distribution.

As an entrepreneur at heart, and a bit of a computer geek, Tim quickly saw a need for a better and easier virtual tour and marketing solution for real estate agents everywhere. After doing much research, along with a huge investment of time and money, **VirtualTourCafe, LLC** was launched in November, 2010. **VirtualTourCafe.com** now has thousands of real estate agents, Brokers, Associations and independent photographers with access to this simple and easy online service in over 44 states from Puerto Rico to Hawaii, as well as Canada and other countries.

Tim is a native Californian and has photographed from New York to Florida, and the glaciers of Alaska from a two-seater 1940's canvas-sided airplane! Tim has traveled and photographed Amsterdam to Nice, Paris and Corsica France, as well as Italy, Cancun, Cozumel, Hawaii and the Chanel Islands. Tim has won photography awards and has had real estate pictures published inside (and on the cover) of HomeFolio and other Real Estate magazines, newspapers and guides. Tim has photographed hundreds, if not thousands of homes for real estate agents and Brokers, but most importantly for this book, Tim has successfully created, managed and built an international real estate virtual tour business from scratch, including a network of approved independent photographers, and now wants to share what he has learned with you.

“Thank you for taking the time to read my book. I truly hope it will add some value to your real estate career and success!”

-Tim Denbo

Dedicated to my partner and sweetheart Hannele Rinta-Tuuri for all her support and encouragement, unconditional love and of course great Finnish-American-Hanne cooking! And to my Mom and Dad who even through my rough years somehow instilled in me an entrepreneurial spirit, a positive attitude, and sense of humor! And to my sister, Suzan Gladieux, my first real estate mentor, who helped me get started in real estate!

Eat a Frog Publishing[©]



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Other Books by Tim Denbo:



[“How to Start Your Own Real Estate Photography Business”](#)

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